



Unclassified/For Official Use Only

October 2013

mishap

LESSONS LEARNED

MISHAP SUMMARY

Mishap
Blank Fire

Damage
N/A

Injury
Minor to Serious

Operation
CONUS Training, Various
Locations

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Mishaps with Blanks

SUMMARY

Scenario 1: During a lull in training scenarios, a Marine placed an AK-47 loaded with blanks upon the chest of another Marine and discharged the weapon. The AK-47 was equipped with a blank firing adapter (BFA) that was in direct contact with the chest of the mishap Marine (MM). The discharge penetrated the left chest of the MM leaving a nickel sized burn and blunt force wound. Immediate first aid was performed and MM was air MEDEVAC'd directly to the local regional medical center.



Scenario 2: During a Battalion FEX, an infantry battalion conducted training combination of live-fire and blank-fire ranges over the course of several days. In order to gain efficiencies at the Ammunition Supply Point (ASP), the ammo was consolidated in a centralized location after each evolution and re-issued to the next unit completing the training. Prior to a blank-fire range, a Corpsman unknowingly loaded blank ammunition into a magazine that contained two

live rounds. The Corpsman fired the full magazine, including the two live rounds; no injuries occurred.

Scenario 3: During SEAL qualification training, a student was shot with a live round by an instructor during a blank-fire training evolution. The live and blank rounds were administratively stored in an office space, and the live rounds were inadvertently grabbed by the instructor.

CONCLUSIONS

The scenarios listed above are just three examples of mishaps involving blanks. The most common thread among the multitude of blank-fire mishaps is a violation of a regulation and/or standard operating procedure (SOP).

RE-OCCURRING LATENT FACTORS

- Lack of supervision.
- Inadequate risk mitigation by commanders when troops are operating fatigued.
- Storing both blank and live rounds in the same ammunition holding area.
- Failing to enforce a 24-hour transition period between live and blank-fire training evolutions.
- Improper line-out procedures.
- Insufficient ORM conducted by the OIC/RSO prior to the training evolution.
- Lack of progressive training.
- No range safety brief.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Enforcing Regulations.** Personnel must be educated in the dangers of using blanks in a training environment. Per the USMC Range Safety Pocket Guide, the minimum safe-separation distance (SSD) is five meters with a dispersion angle of 10 degrees left and right of the gun target line. When firing blanks, the kinetic energy produced by the powder to cycle the bolt can be hazardous if in direct contact or in close proximity to other Marines.
- **Use of the BFA on blank fire ranges is critical in reducing injuries.** BFAs are utilized not only to assist the weapon in cycling the bolt; it also absorbs the shock and reduces the likelihood of a fatality in the event that live ammunition is loaded into the weapon.
- **Blank and live fire ammunition must remain separated.** Per MCO 3570.1B, “blank and live-fire ammunition will not be stored in or issued from the same building at the same time.” From the initial draw through turn in, logistics planners must coordinate and execute physical controls to prevent the possible mixing of blank and live ammunition.
- **Ensure there is a 24 hour transition period between live and blank fire ranges.**
- **Supervision.** Appropriate supervision is essential to the safe execution of all training, even if blanks are used. Leadership must make a calculated risk decision and increase the level of supervision any time Marines are training fatigued. An effective sleep plan must be part of the planning process.
- **Unit SOPs.** Maintaining a detailed line-out procedure that specifically identifies the roles and responsibilities of each individual in the line out process should be incorporated by all units. These procedures should include visual/physical inspection of all weapons, magazines, ammunition pouches, tactical gear on person, and any packs involved in the training or brought to the range.
- **PPE.** Hearing protection and eye protection must be used when firing blanks.